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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO

INFORMATION REPORT

CO NO.

COUNTRY USSR (Latvian SSR)

DATE DISTR. 7 March 1951

SUBJECT Radio Reception and Equipment

NO. OF PAGES 1

PLACE 25X1A

ACQUIRED

NO. OF ENCLS.
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INFO.SUPPLEMENT TO
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- 1 In Riga, radio receiving sets can be bought without any restriction in the special radio shop and also in many other shops selling electrical appliances. There is no shortage of sets; in fact, there is a wide selection of models. In addition to those made in Latvia by the VEF and Radiotekhnika factories, there are sets from Moscow, Leningrad, and the Urals. The sets have two to nine tubes and cost from 300 to 1,600 rubles.
- 2 It is not officially forbidden to listen to foreign broadcasts, but individuals are afraid that they may be arrested if it is known that they do so.
- 3 In 1949, broadcasts of the BBC and the Voice of America in German, Russian, and Polish could be received clearly during the night. Since the beginning of 1950, the jamming by Soviet stations has been 100 percent effective and broadcasts in foreign languages understood in Latvia can no longer be heard. Broadcasts in English can still be received clearly but there are few persons in Latvia who understand English. The same applies to broadcasts in Swedish; but, although they do not understand the language, many persons listen to the religious services broadcast from Sweden. The foreign languages understood by most Latvians are German and Russian. There is also a small percentage speaking Polish, particularly in the Latgale district.
- 4 Latvians are eager to receive authentic news from the West and to listen to religious broadcasts and any news, even propaganda, concerning the Baltic States, as they feel that this will raise their morale.

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REPORT NO. [REDACTED]

INFORMATION REPORT

OD NO.

COUNTRY USSR (Latvian SSR)

DATE DISTR. 7 March 1951

SUBJECT Postal, Telegraph, and Telephone
Communications in Latvia

NO. OF PAGES 2

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SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.Correspondence inside Latvia

1. It can be assumed that in the Latvian SSR there is a certain amount of censorship of inland letters, as they are sometimes delivered two or three days late, although this is not the general rule.
2. There is no restriction on writing letters to prohibited areas (e.g., Lepaya, Dundaga).
3. Postage for an ordinary letter inside Latvia costs .40 ruble.

Correspondence with Foreign Countries

4. It is not known with any certainty whether or not everyone sending letters abroad is, or might be, kept under observation. It is compulsory for the name and address of the sender to be written on the envelope; and, if this is omitted, it is possible that the letter may not be forwarded. There is, however, no immediate personal identity check if a letter is simply dropped in the mail box or even handed in at the post office. It is therefore possible for the name and address on the envelope not to be those of the actual sender.
5. As it is believed that young persons receiving letters from abroad are more likely to be suspect, correspondence with foreign countries is usually conducted, for safety, through an elderly third person.
6. Many Latvians correspond with residents of Germany and Sweden, where there are many Latvian displaced persons. Letters containing pro-Soviet propaganda and requests to return to Latvia are, in fact, encouraged by the authorities. Letters are frequently received from Germany and Sweden, but to receive letters from England or the United States would be conspicuous and could entail unpleasant repercussions. Nevertheless, there have been rumors recently that letters have come from these countries with no ill effects for the recipients.
7. Postage for an ordinary letter abroad is approximately one ruble.

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Telegrams

8. Individuals frequently send telegrams in Latvia. There are no restrictions, except that plain language must be used. An ordinary telegram from Riga to one of the farthest towns in Latvia costs approximately four rubles for six words and takes 6-8 hours, while an express telegram (zibens telegrams) costs approximately eight rubles for six words and takes approximately one hour.

Telephones

9. Since the autumn of 1949, telephones have been available to private subscribers, although at first it was necessary to wait a long time to obtain an instrument. In the beginning, it was usually necessary to bribe the mechanics to produce and to install the instrument without delay, but now the position is much easier and the interval between ordering and obtaining delivery of a telephone is becoming shorter.
10. It is not definitely known whether telephones are tapped by the authorities, but no one in Latvia entrusts any secrets over the telephone.
11. A local call in Riga costs .15 ruble. A long-distance call from Riga to another town costs six or seven rubles for three minutes.

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